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Body Dysmorphic Disorder

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Abstract

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is primarily characterized by an excessive preoccupation with a perceived defect or flaw in appearance that others would be unable to observe, or would consider slight in appearance. BDD is accompanied by repetitive behaviors intended to hide, fix or check on the perceived appearance flaw. This article provides an overview of the current understanding of the factors influencing the onset and maintenance of BDD symptoms, as well as prevalence rates. The assessment and treatment of this common and severe disorder are also discussed.

Keywords

Assessment; BDD; BDD by proxy; Body dysmorphic disorder; Body image; Clinical features; Epidemiology; Etiology; Muscle dysmorphia; Treatment

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Corinna Elliott, PhD is a clinical and research fellow at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), and clinical fellow at Harvard Medical School (HMS). She is currently completing a postdoctoral fellowship in the OCD and Related Disorders Program at MGH/HMS under the mentorship of Dr. Sabine Wilhelm. Dr. Elliott was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship from the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ), in Québec, Canada. Her primary research interests involve factors that influence the onset and maintenance of obsessive compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder. Dr. Elliott has published several articles and chapters on these disorders, and has won research awards from the Canadian Psychological Association and the Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada.



Sabine Wilhelm, PhD is a professor at Harvard Medical School, director of the OCD and Related Disorders Program at Massachusetts General Hospital. She is an internationally known researcher in the areas of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), and tic disorders. She has published over 150 articles, reviews, and chapters on the cognitive functioning, prevalence, and treatment outcome of these disorders. In addition, Dr. Wilhelm has authored and coauthored several books, including a recently published treatment manual for BDD entitled: A cognitive behavioral treatment manual for body dysmorphic disorder. She also wrote the self-help book *Feeling Good About the Way You Look: A Program for Overcoming Body Image Problems*.

Dr. Wilhelm has been the principal investigator or site principal investigator of 7 NIMH-funded research grants. She is the vice chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the International OCD Foundation, and she serves on the Scientific Council for the Anxiety and Depression Association of America as well as on the Tourette Syndrome Association Behavioral Science Consortium. Dr. Wilhelm serves on several editorial boards and is a Representative-at-Large for the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT).

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